

RAILROADING in NEW JERSEY EXCURSIONS TO THE Coal Fields of Pennsylvania COMMENCING MONDAY, JUNE 27th, 1859. The Central Railroad Co. of New Jersey.

The Coal Rush

(New Jersey probably had a more important role in the establishment and development of railroads than any other state in the country. This article, the fifth of a series, deals with the founding of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western by John I. Blair, who endowed Blair Academy, and the building of the Lehigh Valley by Asa Packer, founder of Lehigh University, as men of vision sensed the importance of Pennsylvania's anthracite fields.)

PIONEER railroad builders found themselves smack up against the rugged mountains, the rocky valleys and the swirling rivers of West Jersey as they stretched their tracks to the west 100 years ago. Something promising great fortune was needed to entice them to pit their flimsy equipment and budgets against those powerful forces of nature.

By 1845 they had that something—Pennsylvania anthracite coal; truly black diamonds!

There was no question of demand. Men who sat throwing hickory logs into hot stoves in Newark in the 1830's speculated on how much longer the First Mountain forests could supply the furnaces. Morris County iron masters faced disaster as their wood supply reached the vanishing point.

The Morris Canal? It was slow and for four or five months every year ice closed it up tightly. Even in the balmy Summer sun it wasn't fast—five slow days from Easton to Newark.

It had to be the railroads—and soon.

The anthracite story began with the building of short stretches of track—both in the Pennsylvania coal fields eastward to the Delaware and in New Jersey westward from tidewater. That perhaps is the basic reason for the bitterness and the vindictiveness that was to come later—no railroad was originally projected in either direction to go all the way.

By 1880 the many small railroads had been welded into four big units, all of them in existence today—the

Lehigh Valley, the Lackawanna, the Jersey Central and the New York, Susquehanna & Western.

But, to go back to the beginning...

RESOURCEFUL, John Taylor Johnston, president of the Jersey Central, reached the Delaware River first. The driving of the last spike in the little village of Phillipsburg in 1852 opened the way to coal riches. Jersey Central's quick roll to the edge of anthracite gave it a lead it didn't lose for 15 years.

Fortunately for Johnston two equally-dynamic figures in the Pennsylvania coal fields—John I. Blair and Asa Packer—saw in Jersey Central the answer to their own dreams of getting to tidewater.

Blair, born on a farm near Delaware, made his first dollar at the age of 10 by selling muskrat skins. He liked the heady feeling of money so much that soon after his 11th birthday he told his mother he was quitting school.

"I'm going to be rich, mother," he said, simply.

Blair owned a general store in Gravel Hill (now Blairstown) when he was 18, and operated a chain of five stores nine years later. Even bigger things were ahead. Over in Oxford the Scranton brothers were making the rich iron mines pay. Blair

joined the Scrantons and followed them to the Pennsylvania anthracite fields in 1846.

Just before his 50th birthday John I. Blair helped found the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western in Pennsylvania to connect the Delaware River and the Lackawanna coal fields surrounding what is now Scranton.

Blair looked back to Jersey again: He saw in the Jersey Central an obvious way to get Lackawanna coal from the Delaware Water Gap to tidewater.

MORRIS and Essex leaders, meanwhile, were planning by 1850 to push their railroad north from Hackettstown to the Gap and a junction with the D. L. & W. The M. & E. would have been perfectly happy—nay, desperately overjoyed—to carry every last ounce of Lackawanna anthracite to the Hudson River.

John I. Blair had other plans.

He set up his Warren Railroad in a deal with the D. L. & W. and the Jersey Central. The total capitalization of \$450,000 was to be split three ways. The D. L. & W. was to get a perpetual lease of the Warren and the

Central was to give D. L. & W. coal a perpetual right-of-way to Elizabethport—and Warren stockholders were to get 7 per cent on their money.

The M. & E. was to get nothing.

Of course the Morris & Essex sought an injunction to keep the Warren from building over almost the very route it had chosen for itself through Warren County. Blair successfully fought the injunction and started to build.

The injunction proved easier to surmount than the rough Warren County mountain country. A 3,500-foot tunnel had to be blasted through Scott's Mountain near Oxford. At Vass Gap, near Manunka Chunk, a lesser tunnel had to be smashed through a rocky hill. It was a railroad undertaking calculated to make engineers of the 1850s watch with awe.

EIGHT years went by before the tunneling and the blasting ended. A tremendously-high trestle bridge had to be built above the Musconetcong River at Changewater, a long stone viaduct had to be constructed to bridge the Pequest River. No wonder it took four contractors and a succes-

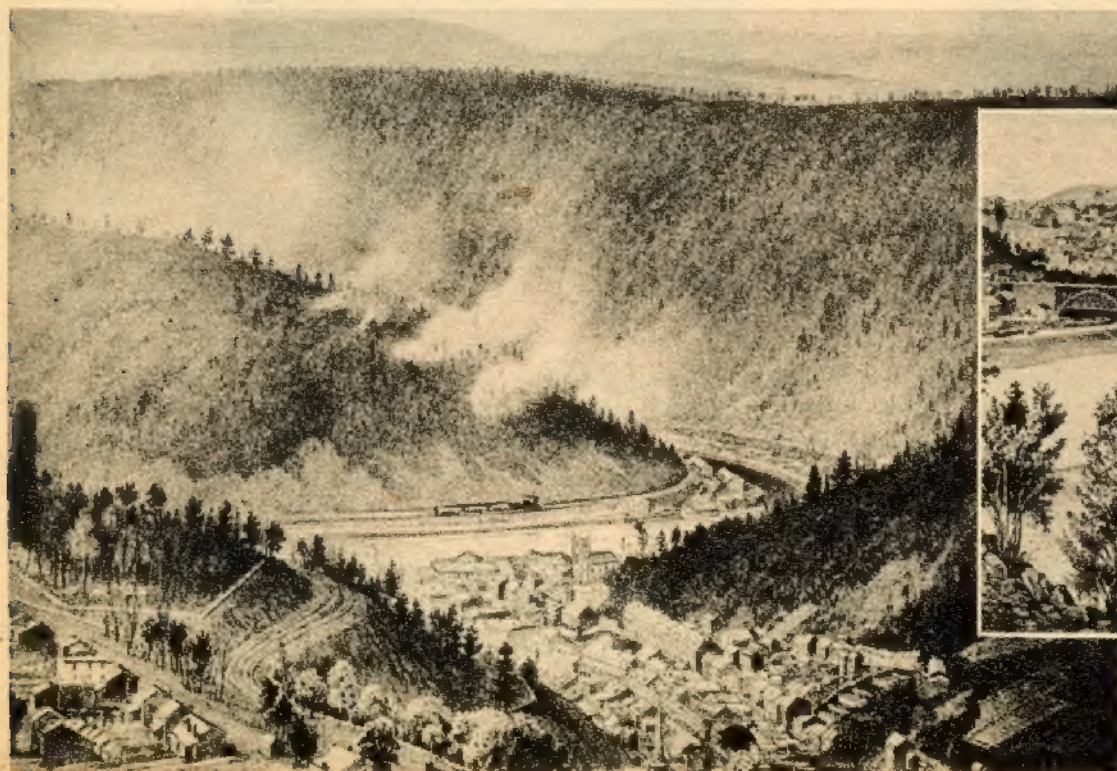
BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

Early Jersey Railroads, Struggling for Financial Foothold, Discovered Bonanza in 'Black Diamonds' From Pennsylvania

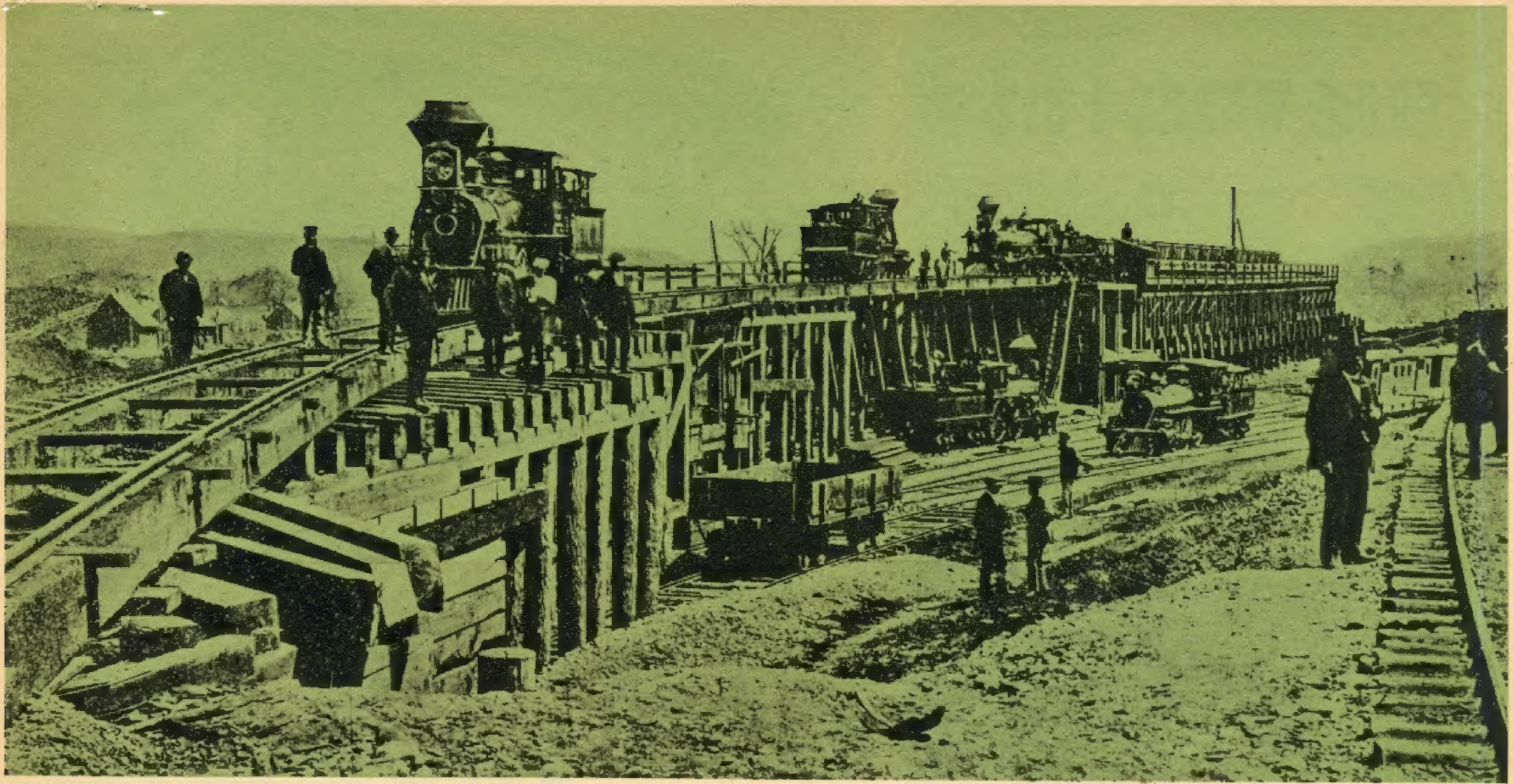


Lackawanna train at Delaware Water Gap around 1880 and poster advertising trip to Pennsylvania coal fields.

(Photographs from W. A. Lucas, Thomas T. Taber and Railroad Magazine)



ABOVE: Easton from Phillipsburg Rock in 1875 with Lehigh Valley Bridge over the Delaware. Jersey Central tracks are in lower right and Morris Canal in foreground. LEFT: "Bird's eye" view of Mauch Chunk showing Lehigh Valley train on opposite side of Lehigh River.



Nineteenth Century coal yard was scene of hustle and bustle as several engines helped push the loaded flatcars upgrade to end of long trestle.

sion of engineers before the Warren Railroad was finished.

While the blasting and digging were going on beneath the mountain a temporary track was laid over the top. Coal cars started running in May, 1856, from near Scranton down over the D. L. & W. to the Delaware River, then over the Warren to Hampton Junction and on to Elizabethport via the Central.

Meanwhile, Asa Packer was building his Lehigh Valley Railroad to Easton from another section of the Pennsylvania hard coal region.

Packer left his Connecticut home at 17 to become a carpenter's apprentice in Pennsylvania. He was a bright boy; he quickly realized that his future was in hard coal. By the time he was 35 he was a wealthy man and leader of a group planning to connect Mauch Chunk, Pa., with Easton by a railroad.

The railroad, destined to become the Lehigh Valley, was chartered in 1846 as the Delaware, Lehigh, Schuylkill and Susquehanna Railroad (they were missing no rivers). Public enthusiasm was lacking, stock sales were poor.

Asa Packer set out in 1852 to complete the railroad himself. He laid a single track line from Mauch Chunk to Easton and built a two-level bridge across the Delaware River to connect the Lehigh Valley with the Jersey

Central and the Belvidere-Delaware railroads in Phillipsburg.

THESE were golden days for the Jersey Central. In October, 1855, the Lehigh Valley—or Packer Road—was complete from the Mauch Chunk coal region to Phillipsburg.

Jersey Central had a tight hold on the anthracite traffic. It leased rolling stock to the Lehigh Valley and laid down a third rail from Hampton Junction to Elizabethport so that the extra-wide coal cars of the Lackawanna could go all the way to Elizabethport without change. Most coal headed for tidewater went over the Central.

In its first year of full operation, 1856, the Lehigh Valley shipped 418,235 tons of anthracite. The Lackawanna sent as many as 700 or 800 coal-laden cars to the east via the Central.

The co-operation of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western and the Jersey Central seemed ideal for both. The M. & E. intruded somewhat into the happy family in 1867 when it made a physical link with the Warren Railroad at Washington, N. J., but the thousands of tons of coal rolling into Hampton Junction every day made life good for Jersey Central.

That made the blow in 1868 doubly hard to bear.

The D. L. & W. had long desired to control its direct outlet to New York harbor. It had one of three choices—the M. & E., the Jersey Central or the obsolescent Morris Canal.

JERSEY CENTRAL was prosperous—an ironical thing, in a way, since it was D. L. & W. coal which helped make it sleek. The D. L. & W. was disinclined to dicker for control of the Central. The more the D. L. & W. looked the more it liked the M. & E. The M. & E. was planning a freight route into Hoboken by way of Boonton to supply a direct route free of forbidding grades to the Hudson River. The financially embarrassed M. & E. was also ready for the Lackawanna's wooing.

Ready for wooing? That's putting it mildly. The M. & E. was a railroad girl who had run up a debt of \$340,000 in 1864, had seen that rise to a staggering \$6,347,437 in 1868. Along came the big, handsome (and rich) Lackawanna and picked up the tab—with the promise to pay the whole M. & E. family of stockholders an annual 7 per cent dividend.

The turning point in the fight for anthracite had arrived. As soon as the Lackawanna gained its own line to tidewater, both Jersey Central and the Lehigh Valley had to protect themselves.

The D. L. & W.-Jersey Central "perpetual" relationship ended violently in the mid 70s. Central solved its problem partially by leasing the Lehigh & Susquehanna Railroad in Pennsylvania in 1871. It still had its link with the Lehigh Valley, but that ended when Lehigh Valley leased the Morris Canal in 1871.

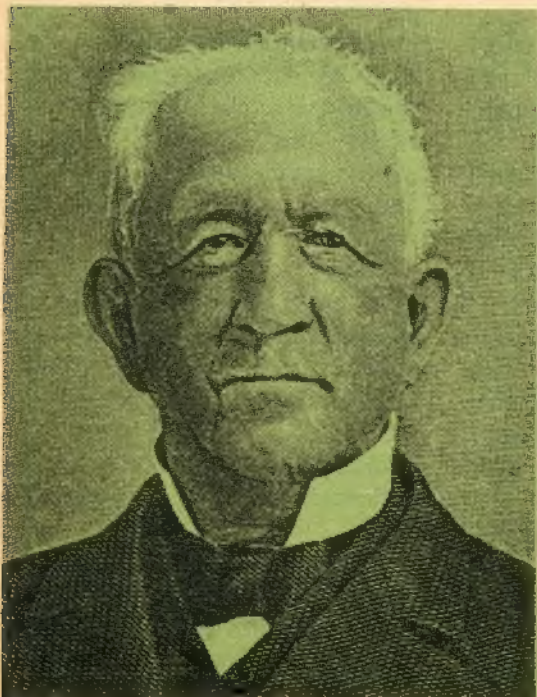
THE Lehigh Valley was merely sparing for time. The canal had proved a costly transportation medium. However, the canal owners controlled 60 acres of extremely valuable waterfront in Jersey City, which went to Lehigh Valley with the lease. Lehigh Valley set out to reach the canal waterfront property by rail.

In 1872 it chartered the Eastern & Amboy Railroad, to run south of the Jersey Central, via Flemington Junction to Perth Amboy.

Lehigh Valley engineers unhesitatingly started a tunnel through the Musconetcong mountain in 1872 and finished it in 1875 at a cost of millions of dollars. The rest of the railroad was graded and double-tracked before the tunneling was through.

Hundreds of workers, many of them immigrants, were taken to the North Hunterdon area to dig the tunnel. In September, 1872, trouble

(Continued on Following Page)



John I. Blair and Warren Railroad bridge over the Musconetcong at Changewater used by railroad he set up to link D. L. & W. and Jersey Central.

FROM WHERE I SIT

BY

John Jacob Hockenjos

The other day, when Fred Braun and some of our salespeople were looking over the many strikingly beautiful new wallpaper patterns that had just arrived—Fred suddenly remembered something I think you'll all be amused to hear about.

Fred, incidentally, is a great fellow with a long memory—and a long list of friends. J. Fred Braun has been with the J. J. Hockenjos Co. for 48 years—a little over half the company's lifetime—and what Fred doesn't know about the paint and wallpaper business just isn't worth knowing!

Well, Fred recalled that wallpaper, like the early automobile, was at one time looked upon with immense distrust by the public. Many people considered it unsanitary. It took a while to convince folks that wallpaper was safe and that it was a genuinely constructive contribution to the beauty and convenience of the home. The J. J. Hockenjos Co. pioneered in overcoming this unfounded prejudice, and in bringing beautiful wall-papers to North Jersey's homes.



J. Fred Braun

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Sunday Magazine



Lehigh Valley inspection car "Dorothy" of 1880 had regal bearing of queen.

JERSEY RAILROADS—The Coal Rush

(Cont'd from Preceding Page)

started at Pattenburg in arguments among the laborers over racial differences. Suddenly the arguments flared into a riot. Before the battle ended five workers were dead.

Lehigh Valley's first 125-car coal train headed from Phillipsburg through the tunnel and out over the fields of Hunterdon to Perth Amboy on May 28, 1875. Within a year its line was double-tracked all the way from Easton to Perth Amboy.

Packer lived long enough to see his fondest Lehigh Valley dreams realized before he died in 1879 at 74. Before his death much of his great coal fortune had gone to found Lehigh University in 1865.

JERSEY CENTRAL'S troubles with the D. L. & W. and its loss of the Lehigh business, coming hand in hand with the ruinous financial panic of 1873 put a sudden halt to its prosperity. Johnston, ever-faithful to his railroad, tried to save it. He held a public auction of his fabulous art collection and raised \$300,000. It wasn't enough. Jersey Central went into receivership in 1877.

By 1880 the Jersey Central, the Lackawanna (which, of course, included the Morris & Essex) and the Lehigh Valley had reached tidewater with various degrees of prosperity. They all eyed a newcomer making its way to the coal fields in slow degrees across the state well to the north.

Five railroad charters were combined in 1870 into the New Jersey Midland, father of the N. Y., S. & W. Work started immediately from Hawthorne to Bloomingdale and in less than three years track was laid all the way from Jersey City to Franklin, then north to the New York state border to connect with the New York Midland, to make a through route from Jersey City to Middletown.

Local business was reasonably good. Passenger business was fair. Still, it was apparent that no increase in prosperity could be expected until the road was built to the coal fields.

A SWEEPING reorganization in 1882 brought the name New York, Susquehanna & Western and the completion of the railroad to hard coal outlets. By consolidating several more small companies and building some connecting links the N. Y., S. & W. reached the Delaware River. It made an agreement in 1882 to build into Stroudsburg to pick up Lackawanna coal, thus giving the latter another outlet to New York markets. The Susquehanna River was reached in 1893, when a road was built to Wilkes-Barre. The "Western" was never

Like the coal business, however, the Jersey Central also eventually lost its prestige as a through passenger carrier. The Pennsylvania took over the route through Pittsburgh. The Lehigh Valley and the Lackawanna finished the through-passenger wreckage of the Central by gradually assuming more passenger traffic to Chicago by way of Buffalo.

NOW, what about John I. Blair, the boy who quit school at 11 to get rich?

After his New Jersey railroad ventures he turned to bigger things in the railroad world. With Oakes Ames and



Caboose of the N. Y., S. & W., originally chartered as the New Jersey Midland R. R. in 1870.

realized, except by indirect connection with other railroads.

Incidentally, even though the N. Y., S. & W. didn't fulfill its "Western" promise, one of the coal carriers, the Jersey Central, did so as early as 1882, when it advertised its "Allentown Route" to Chicago—the "shortest link to the West." Trains sped to Easton on the Central, to Allentown on the Lehigh Valley and to Pittsburgh via the Reading and the Pennsylvania. Connections were available to Chicago.

Railroad folk shook their heads in admiration. Only 16 hours and 5 minutes to Pittsburgh! From the shores of the Hudson to the shores of Lake Michigan in 36 hours!

others he helped get the charter for the Union Pacific and personally built the first 100 miles west from Omaha. Before he died he had become president of 16 different railroads and is said to have owned more railroad property than any other man in the world.

Blair eventually owned land throughout the country equal to half the area of New Jersey and traveled 40,000 miles a year. Yet, whenever he could, he returned to Blairstown, where he had endowed Blair Academy in 1848.

When he died in 1899 at the age of 97 the ex-Belvidere farm boy left a fortune estimated at well over \$60,000,000.

Next Week: Paterson Locomotives